

February Heart Month: Week 5

Understanding Blood Pressure

High blood pressure or hypertension is present in almost 30% of the U.S. population and is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease including heart attack and stroke. When someone takes your blood pressure, they are measuring the amount of force pushing against artery walls as your heart pumps blood through your body.

A normal blood pressure is >120/80 mmHg. The top number is the systolic pressure or the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats. The bottom number is the diastolic pressure or the pressure when the heart is at rest.

A healthy diet and regular exercise can help prevent high blood pressure. The Health and Human Services Department conducts Health Maintenance clinics including blood pressure screening nearly every weekday at various Newton locations. Specific dates and times, and more heart healthy tips are available on the city website at www.newtonma.gov

This is week five of a month-long Heart Month series from the Health and Human Services Department. Information was adapted from the American Heart Association.